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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 GEORGETOWN 000015

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS
NOFORN
DEPT FOR WHA/CAR - SEAN WHALEN/WILLARD SMITH
PASS EEB/ESC/IEC - J. BRIAN DUGGAN
AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PASS TO AMEMBASSY GRENADA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/02/04
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ENRG](#) [IR](#) [XL](#) [GY](#)
SUBJECT: Jagdeo Visits Iran

GEORGETOWN 00000015 001.3 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: Karen L. Williams, Charge d'affaires, DOS, Exec;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

[11](#). (C) Summary. President Bharrat Jagdeo returned from his visit to the Middle East, including Iran January 20-21, announcing that the GoG had signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with Iran. Besides announcing these two MoUs, President Jagdeo said Iran would send a team of specialists to Guyana to assess Guyana's mineral deposits. The Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) expects an Iranian official to visit Guyana as early as late March to discuss mineral deposit assessments. Local media have reported President Jagdeo defending his visit to Iran while criticizing U.S. foreign policy. End summary.

[12](#). (U) Background: President Bharrat Jagdeo, from January 14-21 visited Kuwait, UAE and Iran. During his visit to Iran January 20-21, he met with senior Iranian officials including President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. He was accompanied by Foreign Minister Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, Minister of Housing and Water Irfaan Ali, PPP General Secretary Donald Ramotar, and Central Islamic Organization of Guyana President Al Haj Fazeel Ferouz.

[13](#). (SBU) Local media reported that two Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs) were signed between Foreign Minister Rodrigues-Birkett and Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki during President Jagdeo's January 20-21 visit to Iran. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Acting Director for Multilateral and Global Affairs Lesley Collins confirmed these reports. She told PolChief on February 1 that one MoU provides Guyana with a USD1.5 million grant for developing its health sector while the other relates to the removal of restrictions on visa requirements for diplomatic travel.

[14](#). (C) Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) Acting Commissioner William Woolford confirmed media reports that Iran plans to send a team of Iranian experts to Guyana. He told PolChief on February 2 that he would like to discuss a four-to-six year plan with the Iranians to conduct geological, geochemical and geophysical assessments and that he expects an Iranian official to visit Guyana as early as late March. Canadian High Commission Charge d'Affaires Raymond Drouin told PolChief that Canadian mining executives are concerned that Iran is interested in securing future supplies of uranium and Jagdeo's move to welcome an Iranian team may affect Canadian mining company interests in Guyana. Note: The Government of Norway (GoN) is offering an aerial assessment of forest cover under an MoU signed with Guyana in 2009. Depending upon the type of assessment platform used by Norway, a project by Iran could be unnecessary. End note.

[15](#). (C) Local media have reported Jagdeo defending his visit to Iran and criticizing the U.S. The Guyana Times on January 22 quoted

Jagdeo as stating "many of the moves of the Americans around the globe are against the norms and merely ensure their own interests" and "we are not in agreement with their entire stance, and we do express our dissatisfaction with lots of their policies and viewpoints." Kaieteur News published a letter to the editor entitled "what's the fuss about Iran" on February 1 by Presidential Advisor Randy Persaud defending Jagdeo's "right to pursue an independent foreign policy." The letter blamed the U.S. for "bungling" humanitarian relief efforts in Haiti and preventing an aircraft with CARICOM officials from landing. Persaud also blamed the U.S. for "removing a democratically elected leader in Iran in the 1950s," and charged that the U.S. "provided the initial impetus for an Iranian nuclear program." Jagdeo has neither retracted his statements nor countered media reports criticizing the U.S.

16. (C) Comment. President Jagdeo's visit to Iran fits into a pattern of increasing association and identification between his administration and Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) members, but also with his willingness to align with anyone he sees as able to provide monetary assistance to Guyana (preferably without strings). The marked difference in this case is that, although Jagdeo has often made comments or foreign overtures that have provoked displeasure in Guyana before, this time he is not backing down or trying to "spin" his reasoning. Indeed, at least in terms of the Iran visit and his remarks made there disparaging the U.S. in regard to actions with CARICOM on Haiti assistance, despite public high-level push back from the Embassy, and even the general public, Jagdeo hasn't backed down but instead ramped up his campaign via proxies.

Presidential Advisor Randy Persaud is frequently called on to be the unofficial spin-doctor and avatar for the President's views in the media. His letters never name him as a Presidential Advisor,

GEORGETOWN 00000015 002.3 OF 002

although in person he introduces himself as such. His vigorous defense of Jagdeo for visiting Iran, with gratuitous bashing of the U.S. thickly interspersed throughout, comes directly from inside the administration and signals a commitment to closer relations to Iran and a new willingness to alienate the United States. End comment.
WILLIAMS